

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, April 13, 2005

**ENZI URGES HELP COMMITTEE TO APPROVE FDA NOMINEE CRAWFORD;
AGENCY NEEDS SENATE CONFIRMED HEAD**

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today urged approval of the nomination of Dr. Lester W. Crawford as Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) saying the need to improve public confidence in the safety of prescription drugs and food and consumer products requires a permanent head of the agency.

“We need a strong leader at the FDA right now, and one who has a mandate to act. But that mandate flows directly from the act of Senate confirmation,” Enzi said “Without a Senate-confirmed leader, we can’t expect the FDA to be as effective as we need it to be.”

Enzi urged Senators to put aside reservations tied to the pending approval of the Plan B contraceptive. “I know that some of my colleagues on the Committee were not completely satisfied with what they have heard from Dr. Crawford on Plan B,” Enzi said. “But I urge them to take a step back and consider whether holding up a nomination over one drug application currently under consideration at FDA is the right way to achieve a faster review, and a review free from the pressures of politics.”

Dr. Crawford has been Acting Commissioner of FDA since March of 2004 and has a long and distinguished career in public service. The HELP Committee has received letters of support for Dr. Crawford’s nomination from more than 100 individuals and organizations.

“We have all been waiting for many months for President Bush to send us a qualified nominee for this post. I respect the right of my colleagues to disagree with a President’s choice for this position, or the policies that a President’s nominee might pursue,” Enzi added. “But I think we would set a dangerous precedent if we were to hold up any President’s choice for FDA Commissioner over one drug. It would be an especially dangerous precedent at this point in time.”

Enzi confirmed that in 1998 he opposed President Clinton’s nominee for FDA Commissioner while seeking information on the FDA’s review and labeling for the abortion drug RU-486. However, despite his misgivings about the actions that President Clinton’s FDA took with respect to RU-486, Enzi said he did not block a vote on the Senate floor. As a result, the Senate confirmed President Clinton’s nominee three weeks after the Committee vote.

The FDA has been without a confirmed Commissioner for over a year. Earlier this year, 17 members of this Committee sent a letter to the President urging him to nominate a

Commissioner to lead this important agency in its mission to promote and protect the public health through effective and efficient regulation of our food supply, medical technologies, and other critical products.